



March 1, 2021

The Honorable Muriel Bowser
Mayor
Executive Office of the Mayor
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser,

Thank you for all that you and your administration have done to set the District on the road to recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. Your efforts to prepare schools for reopening and helping return several thousand students to school buildings helps our children begin to reconnect, not just to learning, but to the trusted adults and the valued activities so vital to their well-being.

At the [State Board's February 17 Public Meeting](#), we received testimony from more than a dozen members of the public calling for a return to high school athletics this spring. Witnesses shared concerns about the deteriorating mental health of student athletes, about the impact of canceled athletics on students' college prospects, and the equity issues created by the prohibition on school-based athletics.

Under [Mayor's Order 2020-123](#), the District effectively prohibited all athletic activities, including practices and skills development, for high school aged athletes in public, public charter, parochial, and private schools. District of Columbia students are currently not permitted to connect in any official capacity with their coaches or teams, including strength and conditioning work. While the Mayor's Order currently prohibiting high school athletics expires with the Public Health Emergency on March 17, 2021, there is widespread concern that the prohibition on high school athletics may be extended.

As of March 10, high school athletics will have resumed in Fairfax County, VA and in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties and Baltimore City, MD.

According to the District of Columbia State Athletic Association (DCSAA), the District of Columbia will be one of only three states across the country that have not resumed high school athletics.

Neighboring jurisdictions in both Maryland and Virginia have also allowed the resumption of non-school athletic leagues and some District student athletes—those who can afford to pay the associated fees and have access to private transportation—have been participating in those leagues. The continued prohibition of school-based athletics has created significant inequities for District resident students for whom such school-based sports are the sole venue for athletics.





As students—including high school students—begin to return to in-person instruction inside school buildings, following recommended Center for Disease Control (CDC) and DC Health guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and DCSAA Guidance, we believe it is inconsistent to prohibit athletic activities, most of which are played outdoors where the risk of spread of the virus is significantly reduced.

We respectfully request that you consider immediately lifting the prohibition on high school athletics outlined in Mayor's Order 2020-123 and permit our student athletes the chance to reconnect with their coaches and teammates and to safely return to high school sports in the spring. We ask that federal COVID-19 relief dollars and/or city resources be applied to implementing the protocols for youth sports established by the CDC, DC Health, and DCSAA. Sports could also be included in plans for summer supplemental learning opportunities.

We have attached the testimony we received from members of the public, as well as several petitions^{1 2} currently being circulated by students, families, and coaches.

Sincerely,

Zachary Parker, President and Ward 5 Representative
Emily Gasoi, Vice President and Ward 1 Representative
Jacque Patterson, At-Large Representative
Allister Chang, Ward 2 Representative
Ruth Wattenberg, Ward 3 Representative
Frazier O'Leary, Ward 4 Representative
Jessica Sutter, Ward 6, Representative
Eboni-Rose Thompson, Ward 7 Representative
Carlene Reid, Ward 8 Representative
Alexander O'Sullivan, Student Representative
Shayla Dell, Student Representative

cc: Dr. LaQuandra S. Nesbitt, MD, MPH, DC Health

¹ Allow high school aged student-athletes to re-engage in the District of Columbia, <https://www.change.org/p/mayor-bowser-allow-high-school-aged-student-athletes-to-re-engage-in-the-district-of-columbia>

² Allow DCPS Football Activities for Players' Emotional Well-Being and College Scholarships, <https://www.change.org/p/mayor-muriel-bowser-allow-dcps-football-activities-for-player-s-well-being-and-future-opportunities>

